

Exhibit A

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POLITICS

Chinese Tycoon Holed Up in Manhattan Hotel Is Accused of Spying for Beijing

U.S. research firm in commercial dispute alleges exiled businessman Guo Wengui, a frequent critic of China's Communist Party, is a spy for Beijing



Chinese businessman Guo Wengui, living in exile in a New York hotel, is a vocal critic of China's Communist Party. But a U.S. research firm accuses him of spying for Beijing. **PHOTO: NATALIE KEYSSAR FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

By Aruna Viswanatha and Kate O'Keeffe

Updated July 22, 2019 1:26 pm ET

For the past four years, Chinese businessman Guo Wengui has lived in an 18th-floor apartment at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel in New York, where he fires off social-media missives that purport to expose corruption at the highest levels of the Chinese government.

He said his efforts have rattled Beijing and that he has applied for U.S. asylum to protect himself. China hard-liners in the U.S., including President Trump's former adviser Steve Bannon, have rallied to his side.

But Washington-area research firm Strategic Vision US LLC, in a commercial dispute with Mr. Guo, alleged in a federal court counterclaim Friday that he is a spy for the Chinese government.

“Strategic Vision’s claims that Mr. Guo is a Beijing-backed spy utterly lack credibility,” Daniel Podhaskie, an attorney for Mr. Guo, said in a written statement.

The origins of the commercial dispute, pending in a Manhattan federal court, go back to January 2018, when Mr. Guo hired the firm with a contract valued at \$9 million, according to court filings by both sides.

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- [China’s Pursuit of Fugitive Businessman Guo Wengui Kicks Off Manhattan Caper Worthy of Spy Thriller \(Oct. 22, 2017\)](#)

Mr. Guo asked the company to investigate the financial history, social-media presence and travel

details of a list of Chinese nationals he claimed were linked to top Chinese Communist Party officials, according to a court document filed by Strategic Vision. He wired the company \$1 million to start the project, according to filings from both sides in the dispute.

Strategic Vision, based in Virginia, is owned by French Wallop, who was married to now-deceased Wyoming Sen. Malcolm Wallop, a Republican. The company said in Friday’s court filing that Mr. Guo’s representation that he wanted to destabilize the Chinese Communist Party was “in alignment with Strategic Vision’s worldview.”

Mr. Guo’s lawyer said in a statement Sunday to The Wall Street Journal that Strategic Vision was abusing litigation privilege to slander Mr. Guo.

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A lawyer for Strategic Vision, Eddie Greim, said: “Our goal is not only to hold Guo Wengui and his network accountable but also to protect supporters of a free China from further injury.”

Strategic Vision enlisted investigators who are former intelligence or law-enforcement personnel to perform the research, according to Friday’s filing. The filing said investigators determined the first 15 names provided by Mr. Guo had been designated by the U.S. as “Records Protected” individuals, for whom certain information wasn’t subject to disclosure. Such a designation is used in highly classified and access-restricted government databases, former intelligence officials said. The immigration status about such designees is often blocked in restricted government databases, and can suggest the person may be a foreigner who is assisting the U.S. government, experts said.

Strategic Vision said it concluded Mr. Guo was seeking information on Chinese nationals who may have been helping the U.S. government in national-security investigations or who were involved in other sensitive matters, according to the filing.

“Guo never intended to use the fruits of Strategic Vision’s research against the Chinese Communist Party,” the court filing said. “That is because Guo was not the dissident he claimed to be. Instead, Guo Wengui was, and is, a dissident-hunter, propagandist, and agent in the service of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party.”

Mr. Guo’s lawyer, Mr. Podhaskie, denied the allegations. “Mr. Guo is the most-wanted dissident worldwide by the Chinese Communist Party and has been their most outspoken and vitriolic critic since his arrival in the United States,” he said in his statement.

The Chinese embassy didn’t respond to a request for comment.



Mr. Guo, seen on the balcony of his apartment overlooking Central Park, hired research firm Strategic Vision in January 2018 to investigate a list of Chinese nationals. PHOTO: TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Through a company he controlled, Mr. Guo in his own, earlier lawsuit unsealed in August 2018 claimed breach of contract against Strategic Vision, alleging it didn't provide the information he was seeking, according to the lawsuit.

Strategic Vision, to bolster its allegation that Mr. Guo is a Chinese spy, said in Friday's court filing that his financial standing doesn't comport with his self-portrayal as a dissident threatened by Beijing.

Mr. Guo, who built a real estate empire in Beijing, has said he fled China in 2014 after hearing that a state security official to whom he was close would soon be arrested, The Wall Street Journal has reported.

Since then, Chinese authorities have frozen his assets and threatened his family, according to Mr. Guo. Still, he settled at the Sherry-Netherland in 2015, paying \$67.5 million for the apartment overlooking Central Park. He has continued to travel frequently and got a membership at Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Fla.

In 2017, after saying he had applied for U.S. asylum, Mr. Guo told the Journal he had set aside more than \$150 million for legal fees to continue his fight against Beijing.

Mr. Podhaskie said in his statement that "certain of Mr. Guo's assets in China valued at approximately USD\$30 billion have been sold for pennies on the dollar" by Chinese Communist Party officials and that Mr. Guo "has never taken a penny out of China or Hong Kong since he began speaking out" against them.

Mr. Guo also has tried to use his money and allies such as Mr. Bannon to influence two interlinked groups in Washington that favor a tough stance toward China, Strategic Vision alleged in the filing. The company said this is further evidence that Mr. Guo is working for the Chinese Communist Party—not against it.

According to the filing, a group led by Messrs. Guo and Bannon allegedly discussed ways to provide "large amounts" of money to the Center for Security Policy—a conservative Washington think tank—and the newly formed "Committee on the Present Danger: China" that the center backs. Some people at the think tank viewed it as an attempt by Mr. Guo to take over the anti-China committee, the filing said.

The Center for Security Policy didn't respond to requests for comment. Brian Kennedy, chairman of the committee, said there had never been any donation offered by Mr. Guo to the committee.

Mr. Podhaskie denied those allegations and said Messrs. Guo and Bannon "have a joint mission in regards to China," which is to "get rid of the radical cadre inside the Communist Party."

Mr. Bannon declined to comment.

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